

# Proud People Don't Say Thanks

By **John Piper** • November 17, 2017

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"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge." —Psalm 19:1-2

*"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."*

—Romans 1:18

Romans 1:18-23 describes what is universally true of all people who have not come under the power of the Gospel. They perceive truth about God from creation but their natural inclinations are so strong against this truth that they suppress it (verse 18).

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge" (Psalm 19:1-2). "For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made" (Romans 1:20).

For those who, by God's grace, love the truth and don't want to suppress it, creation becomes a dazzling lesson book in theology. It teaches the open mind that there is a deity, an infinitely marvelous Being, who made the world. Everything I have is from Him. Who but the Creator gives to all men life and breath and everything (Acts 17:25)? Standing before the irresistible logic of the lesson book of creation, I have to admit that everything is a gift. It is inconceivable that the Creator should ever owe me anything.

But what can I give my Maker?

## **Thanksgiving Is the Message of Creation**

The answer to that question, too, stands written in the lesson book of creation mirrored in our own conscience. I must be thankful to Him! If I cannot *add* to His glory, then I must *honor* His glory. “The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me” (Psalm 50:23).

“Gratitude is the echo of grace as it reverberates through the hollows of the human heart.”

Gratitude honors God. Gratitude is the echo of grace as it reverberates through the hollows of the human heart. Gratitude is the unashamed acceptance of a free gift and the heartfelt declaration that we cherish what we cannot buy. Therefore gratitude glorifies the free grace of God and signifies the humility of a needy and receptive heart.

It is really amazing how much we can know of God and our duty simply by honestly pondering the lesson book of creation: that there is an infinitely marvelous Being who made all things, who has eternal power, to whom we owe life and breath and everything, and therefore whom we should glorify and thank from the bottom of our hearts day and night. Nobody who will own up to reality needs the Bible to tell him that he should glorify God and give Him thanks. It is written in the sky and in every human heart—but nobody does it.

## **Sin Is the Exchange of God's Glory**

What Paul means in Romans 3:23, that all men fall short of God's glory, is explained in Romans 1:23—all men exchange God's glory for images. So the meaning of sin is plain: sin is taking the diamond of God's glory into the pawn shop of pride and hocking it for the cracked marble of self-reliance. Notice verses 22-23: “Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images.” All creation testifies that we are the creatures of an eternally powerful, all-glorious Creator and that we should cherish His glory above all things and give Him heartfelt thanks day and night.

But for some mysterious reason, the human heart hates that truth and suppresses it (verse 18), or as verse 25 says, we exchange “the truth about God for a lie.” Why? Because we want to be thought of as wise. “Claiming to be wise, they ... exchanged the glory of the immortal God.”

## **Proud People Hate the Lesson of Creation**

The reason the human heart hates the truth that creation teaches is because it is too humbling. From sea to shining sea the creation shouts that God has eternal power, God is the infinitely marvelous Being, God is the Maker of all that is, and we are utterly dependent on His absolutely free choices to create and sustain our life or not, and we should therefore glorify Him and not ourselves and give thanks to Him and not take credit for ourselves.

But proud people don't say thanks. Again, gratitude is the echo of grace reverberating through the hollows of the human heart. But proud people don't need grace. They don't think their hearts are hollow without God. They are filled with wisdom! So “claiming to be wise, they exchange the glory of the immortal God for images.” Proud people don't say thanks.

## **Broken People Say Thanks**

Now we must warn ourselves not to point a pious finger here as though Madalyn Murray O'Hair or Hugh Hefner or some pagan tribe were the only defendants in this case. We who know God well are also indicted by this text.

We have need of deep contrition and [repentance](http://peacewithgod.net/?utm_source=bgmainsite&utm_medium=pwg+Link&utm_campaign=pwg+Internal&utm_content=proud+people+do+nt+say+thanks+john+piper+decision+article+111717&outreach=proud+people+no+thanks) ([http://peacewithgod.net/?utm\\_source=bgmainsite&utm\\_medium=pwg+Link&utm\\_campaign=pwg+Internal&utm\\_content=proud+people+do+nt+say+thanks+john+piper+decision+article+111717&outreach=proud+people+no+thanks](http://peacewithgod.net/?utm_source=bgmainsite&utm_medium=pwg+Link&utm_campaign=pwg+Internal&utm_content=proud+people+do+nt+say+thanks+john+piper+decision+article+111717&outreach=proud+people+no+thanks)).

For the true child of God, the repeated discovery of his own sin brings godly grief which produces repentance and leads to salvation and brings no regret (2 Corinthians 7:10). I have no ability to understand people who say that we should not urge contrition and poverty of spirit upon people whose sins have been forgiven and who are being made new ([http://peacewithgod.net/?utm\\_source=bgmainsite&utm\\_medium=pwg+Link&utm\\_campaign=pwg+Internal&utm\\_content=proud+people+do+nt+say+thanks+john+piper+decision+article+111717&outreach=proud+people+no+thanks](http://peacewithgod.net/?utm_source=bgmainsite&utm_medium=pwg+Link&utm_campaign=pwg+Internal&utm_content=proud+people+do+nt+say+thanks+john+piper+decision+article+111717&outreach=proud+people+no+thanks)) by the indwelling Christ. It is precisely because Christ loves me so much that the coolness of my zeal in prayer and meditation and worship and witness grieves me so deeply. Shall we take the half-heartedness of our devotion lightly because He is so kind? Have you never been driven to tears of remorse precisely because you are forgiven?

Proud people don't say thanks. But people who believe these truths do, from the bottom of their heart. ©1983 John Piper

*Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version.*

*Excerpted from a message at DesiringGod.org.*

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Susan Grow says:

December 1, 2017 at 8:19 am (<https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/november-2017/proud-people-dont-say-thanks/comment-page-2/#comment-1632543>)

Well-written. Speaks to my heart.

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Debbie Rich says:

November 26, 2017 at 8:21 pm (<https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/november-2017/proud-people-dont-say-thanks/comment-page-2/#comment-1631349>)

Thank you, Jesus, with all my heart. It should be so easy for everyone to say, but I have just in the last couple years been able to say it everyday—on a good or bad day. I thank Him, and know He loves me always.

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